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Rammanohar Lohia: An Appreciation

Gopal Krishna

In Indian political life Lohia belonged to a lost generation — the generation that came into the national movement in the early thirties. These men played a creditable role in the movement but were too young to claim a share in power immediately after Independence, and by the time conditions were propitious for change of leadership they were too old.

During the last years of his life Lohia's non-conformism received greater notice than his many insights into the processes of history and politics.

To be a non-conformist is a rare enough virtue in a conformist society such as ours, but there was a great deal more to Rammanohar Lohia; he embodied some noble aspirations for his country and represented an important strand of opinion in Indian political life. And in the socialist movement, his was the decisive influence at many critical turning points.

I

IT is less than a year since Rammanohar Lohia died at the relatively early age of 57, just at a time when he was emerging as the leader of democratic opposition and appeared to be on the threshold of political success after a long and at times lonely career of struggle. In Indian political life he belonged to a lost generation — the generation that came into the national movement in the early thirties; these men played a creditable role in the movement, but were too young to claim a share in power immediately after Independence and too old by the time conditions were propitious for a change of leadership. It was a generation of nationalists who had looked beyond Independence to a reconstruction of society and who pioneered the socialist movement in India, working for it with considerable devotion and giving it a humane complexion owing much to the influence of Gandhiji, whom they revered even when they did not subscribe to his economic, political or moral ideas or adopt his remedies for the defects of society. Among them were some of the most dedicated and thoughtful men of the time, but their contribution to nation-building in the post-Independence era has been small in relation either to their talents or to the requirements of the situation.

The socialist movement failed to build up a mass following and an effective organisation, and it is to these failures rather than to the machinations of enemies or false friends that it owes its decline. For a time their identification with idealistic causes and refusal to play *realpolitik* made the leaders of the movement attractive to the younger generation after Independence. But it could be said of them, as the great nineteenth century Russian socialist thinker Alexander Herzen said of another set of people: "they faded before they could flower; they exhausted themselves not by passion, but in passionate dreams". By the time the Congress hegemony was broken, the socialist leadership of Lohia's generation had, with the solitary exception of Lohia himself, been lost to the movement by death, defection or retreat from politics. It is a tragedy of Indian political development that the socialist movement did not mature into a substantial force and there may yet be a price to be paid for the disintegration of what once appeared to be a uniquely promising group.

Conscience-Keeper of Socialism

Rammanohar Lohia was one of the founders of the Indian socialist movement and was acknowledged as the most lively and thoughtful among its leaders. I did not know him well and was not among his ardent followers. But those of us who were drawn to the socialist movement after Independence were impressed by the quality of his intelligence, his imagination, his passion for equality and hatred of the inequities of Indian society. Re-reading his earlier writings made me aware of the insight and the passion he brought to Indian, and particularly socialist, politics. Among his followers he inspired devotion, and among his colleagues, one suspects, equal resentment. The source of his followers' devotion was his freedom from vulgar personal ambitions. His colleagues' resentment was due to the self-righteous indignation which he directed at them, often with little restraint or generosity. These venomous attacks were more frequently reserved for his colleagues and friends than for the enemies of socialism. He laboured under a strong sense that the cause of Indian unity and of socialism had been betrayed by the leadership and he took on himself the heroic, if unpleasant, role of a conscience-keeper of public life, on the alert to denounce corruption and deviations.

Since I did not know him well I must be content to deal with his public personality rather than attempt a comprehensive appreciation. And even in dealing with a public personality it is difficult to disentangle the real man from the image he projected of himself — the more so since the image must itself have modified the personality of the man. Lohia saw himself as an upright and uncompromising nonconformist, sensitive to human distress, and playing the role of an accusing prophet in an unjust society. This was his estimate of himself, and the basis on which he wished to be accepted by his contemporaries.

II

Two personal relationships appear to have been of crucial importance to Lohia throughout his political life. He was devoted, I think, only to Mahatma Gandhi, though it was not an uncritical devotion in the manner of many others. He was never a follower of Gandhiji, but he found him a source of strength and comfort. When he met Gandhiji for the first time in 1932 he himself was only twenty-two and the latter sixty-three and Lohia felt towards him as a grandson towards a grandfather; he has written of the influence exercised on him through this protective relationship by Gandhiji's benign and powerful personality. It was no mean achievement on the part of Lohia to have been so close to Gandhiji and yet to have retained independence of mind and a sharply defined and differentiated identity. This intellectual independence combined with a deep emotional bond made it possible for Lohia to cultivate an understanding of Gandhiji which is more sensitive and

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profound than that of the latter's other contemporaries — devotees, colleagues or critics. He once wrote: "At times, when I have tried to think of Gandhiji, he has come to me in the shape of an image: a series of steps mounting upwards, all set in a specific direction, but the top of it never yet completely formed, and ever continuing to go up . . . One step goes on leading to the next step in such a fashion that not alone a great man but millions alongside of him mount up the unending ladder going into a specific direction."[1]

There was nothing religious or spiritual in Lohia's personality that responded to the personal ideals one associates with Gandhiji. He hated poverty because it degraded men and he had no love for fasting or abstinence or any other form of self-denial either for self-discipline or for spiritual seeking. But the social and political ideals of Gandhiji he made his own. Two features of Gandhiji's outlook and action had distinguished him from his predecessors and contemporaries; a commitment to the idea of an Indian nation embracing all members of society — best expressed in his remark that a Harijan girl should become the President of free India — and a belief that every individual has inner resources of his own to resist oppression, which he had exemplified in his actions throughout his long public life. It was these ideas that appealed to Lohia and corresponded with his own populist outlook and uninhibited resistance to social and political injustice.

Disenchantment with Nehru

The other significant relationship was with Jawaharlal Nehru. It was Nehru who groomed Lohia for future leadership, giving him his first responsible appointment in the Secretariat of the All-India Congress Committee, and there is ample evidence to show that for a long time Lohia, in the company of many others, looked to him as the embodiment of all he and they admired. But temperamentally Nehru was very different from Gandhiji. He was a fastidious and distant man who would conceal his own warm personal feelings because restraint in matters of sentiment rather than exuberance fitted his temperament. His radicalism appealed to the younger generation and for socialists he was their acknowledged leader without himself being a member of the Congress Socialist Party. His own attitude towards the Congress Socialists was ambiguous. He disliked sectarian movements, and though he was happy to have the support of the Congress Socialists, he would not commit himself to them because they represented only a small faction in the national movement and he preferred to be a leader of the movement as a whole, even if it meant associating with people who did not share his views on crucial questions of policy or programme.

As long as the struggle for freedom continued, the socialists were happy with this arrangement. But disenchantment began soon after Independence. For Lohia it took an extreme form, as a result of the disappointment of his exaggerated expectations untempered by an awareness of the constraints under which Nehru, as the leader of the Congress Party and the Prime Minister of free India, exercised power. But there was more to it. I have often wondered whether the depth of bitterness Lohia felt towards Nehru was not in part at least due more to the fact that Nehru obviously loved power than to his failure to utilise it for the goals Lohia (also possibly Nehru) believed in; it was the hostility of a political and intellectual anarchist towards a man of power and a successful ruler. Nehru's instinct in politics was elitist and his personal style imperious, in spite of his genuine commitment to democracy and concern for popular well-being. It was this instinct and style that outraged Lohia, and since he had regarded mildness as hypocrisy his attacks on Nehru were unrestrained. The personal nature of his grievance is well brought out in his anguished claim that ". . . he (Nehru) owes me and thousands of others the equivalent of national hope and personal affection burnt in the ugly fires of ignorance, power-seeking and luxury".[2]

It is unfortunate that when it came to Nehru and his role in nation-building Lohia's judgment was vitiated by this deep irrational antagonism derived from a sense of personal betrayal. Nehru's contribution to the development of the political system or the thrust he provided to the modernisation process received no acknowledgment from Lohia and so overwhelming was his prejudice that he was never able to see Nehru's achievement in a historical perspective.

I do not know when Lohia became a socialist, whether during his student days in Germany or after his return to India and what factors made him a socialist rather than a liberal or merely a militant nationalist. Whatever the influences that went into the making of his socialist faith, its keynote was equality. He was a socialist because socialism expressed his aspiration for universal well-being and dignity. From Gandhiji he derived the impulse for personal identification with the people and thus his socialism came to be populist in its orientation.

This populism is the most interesting and original element in his outlook and sharply contrasts with the elitist and authoritarian strands in the socialist movement. It grew out of his view of Indian history and society. He believed that India's recurring national defeats were due to its feeble ruling classes and to the historical divorce between the rulers and the ruled, sanctified and perpetuated by the caste system and buttressed by differences of social culture, especially language. "At the bottom of all of India's ills", he once wrote, "is the most complete loss of identification between the rulers and the ruled . . . "[3] Even in contemporary India the gulf between the two had not been narrowed. Hence his many agitations against the caste system and the continued status of English as the language of the ruling class.

Dangers Ignored

Both the traditional caste system and the new hierarchy based on knowledge of the English language offended the socialist principle of equality and impeded the creation of a unified society which alone could generate the energy needed for safeguarding national freedom. The remedy for this situation lay in a deliberate induction of the true representatives of the masses into the national leadership. His populism found its classic expression in his assertion that ". . . it is impossible to impart vigour to the country's politics unless the uneducated are given a proper place in the leadership"[4] and that "at least half or sixty per cent of the nation's leadership must be selected by design from among the lower castes".[5]

There is no evidence, except for one solitary reference to the danger posed by the multiplicity of scripts,[6] to show that Lohia ever considered the possibility that militant populism, identified with local aspirations, might aggravate parochial tendencies whose ulti-

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mate consequence could be the dissolution of the political unity of India. The idea that a plural society might need to be integrated slowly from above and not be allowed to be fragmented by the less enlightened masses with their narrowly confined sympathies and ferocious local loyalties would possibly have been dismissed by him with contempt.

Few movements in history, except some tribal risings, have been truly populist, and more often than not populist slogans have been exploited by interested politicians or socially-alienated revolutionaries to overturn the established order. It is usually a minority that finds time and has the necessary enthusiasm to engage in political activity. Populism is the first casualty of a successful revolution because an amorphous mass movement proves unequal to the task of social reconstruction. The populist-anarchist who is in perpetual revolt against authority may act as a conscience-keeper of society but is not likely to be its engineer. His own anarchistic predilections made Lohia indifferent, if not blind, to the tasks of government and administration and led him to prefer forms of political protest whose only recommendation was that they undermined the authority of existing institutions. He believed that authority in India, both past and present, was overpowerful and oppressive and had brought the people to a humiliating dependence upon government. The revival of the spirit of freedom required the aura of authority to be greatly diminished, and this his various campaigns were designed to achieve. Since he was never called upon to govern, he was not faced with a choice between his populist beliefs and the demands of government. Characteristically, he once remarked that if the socialists should come to power, he would probably be in the opposition.

III

The most hopeful period in the otherwise melancholy history of the Indian socialist movement was between 1947 and 1952 when it seemed to offer a radical alternative to the Congress party whose commitment to nationalism and democracy it shared but with the additional element of its egalitarianism. Some of Lohia's most imaginative writing belongs to that period when the prospect of socialism in India (and the world) still appeared bright and defeat had not scattered the socialist ranks.

The doctrinal controversies over policy and programme in the socialist movement during this period, in which Lohia as the leading exponent of socialist ideas and policies played a major role, centred round the issues of the place of violence in the pursuit of a socialist revolution, the socialist attitude towards the Congress and the socialist posture on the international conflicts of the time.

Socialists (of all schools) have a special aptitude for acrimonious controversies, especially concerning the content of socialist doctrine or its interpretation for a particular time and circumstance, because right doctrine alone provides the *rationale* for their political activity; at least such was the case until ideologies, as comprehensive theoretical structures claiming to elucidate the laws of social development, as such became discredited.

Commitment to Democracy

The debate through which the socialist movement in India passed soon after Independence was part of the wider controversy about the place of liberty and authority in modern societies, the relationship between the individual and the collectivist, and the question of ends and means. But in addition to these general issues the Indian socialists discussed whether Marxism was relevant to the Indian situation, and whether they should abjure violent means and commit themselves to electoral processes. For a long time they remained sceptical of the parliamentary system of government and its capacity to bring about substantial social and economic change. This scepticism had its origin partly in the revolutionary tradition in the socialist movement — and in this Indian socialists were closer to the communists than to the democratic socialist elements in Europe — and partly in the pre-Independence radicalism which had rejected the gradualist approach, associated with the votaries of constitutionalism, in winning independence. (In retrospect it is clear that the socialists had little comprehension of the actual process of social change, and did not grasp sufficiently that it could not be decreed but had to be absorbed and integrated into routine social processes — a truth Gandhiji had understood several decades earlier.) In converting the pre-Independence revolutionary outlook of Indian socialism into a democratic commitment which abjured violence in domestic affairs Lohia made a substantial contribution.

He argued that plural societies could not afford to rely on violence in handling internal conflicts without risking their own dissolution, while democratic rights opened up the channels of participation to the hitherto disenfranchised strata of the population. In a later well known article, "Dilli also called Delhi",[7] he noted that the tradition of the capital city had been to shed blood at every change of central authority. It was his ambition to see the socialist movement break this tradition. In addition he held that power, both economic and political, ought to be decentralised and that Satyagraha, as a means of protest against injustice and of organising the people's power, had to have a place in a democratic polity. Socialists should also reject the fashionable justification of present suffering in the name of future gains and choose policies and programmes which not only promised good results in the future but also led to immediate benefits. These ideas have now become part of the conventional wisdom of democratic socialism in India but when first formulated they represented major innovations in traditional socialist doctrine.

IV

Rammanohar Lohia was the principal exponent of the Socialist Party's foreign policy in the crucial post-War decade, when the conflict between the Soviet and the Atlantic world dominated international relations and when India as a free nation made its first impact on world affairs. His writings of this period on foreign policy issues have a historical orientation and exhibit an insight into power relations in the contemporary world.

Lohia's attitude to the West, especially to Europe, was mixed. He admired much in the European achievement, especially the European's sense of order, freedom and dignity; and he had no use for vulgar denunciations of Europe. He shared the socialist aspiration for a world order based on the principle of international brotherhood. But at the same time he saw recent history as a struggle for supremacy between nations, continents and civilisations in which Europe had always been the oppressor.

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For nationalists and socialists in the latter half of the forties emergent Asia represented a myth and a hope. In a world without imperialism, socialists looked towards the growth of co-operation among nations, and especially among those drawn together by the struggle against European domination. The formation of the Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon in 1953 was the organisational expression of the Asian socialists' aspiration to create a continental socialist force and project an Asian view on world affairs. In Rangoon in March 1952 Lohia told his fellow Asian socialists: "From Rome to Honolulu is one world. From Tokyo to Cairo and beyond is another . . . Indians in recent times have played truant to history in turning their faces towards the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic, and the misery and glory of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific have been unknown to them. All Asia must first understand and sympathise with itself and then, if possible, evolve a common policy."[8]

Asian, and later Afro-Asian, nations constituted, in the terminology then current, a third force — not, Lohia wrote, because they wished to remain uninvolved in the conflict between the communist and the non-communist powers but because this conflict was superficial and in any case irrelevant to them, as there was an underlying unity between the communist and non-communist segments of western civilisation, while the crucial division in the world was between the technologically-advanced and wealthy nations of Europe and North America and the backward and poor nations of the rest of the world for whom the internal conflicts of the wealthy nations were of no relevance. This analysis, now commonplace, appeared, strikingly original when it was made almost twenty years ago. Lohia described the resulting situation as one in which 'wealth and virtue' had acquired 'exclusive habitats': "Some regions in the world, almost entirely those inhabited by white peoples possess wealth as well as virtue. The coloured world, with one poor exception, possesses neither . . . three-fourths of mankind has lost its significance as a result of poverty and vice."[9]

While Asia had to tackle fundamental problems of internal organisation before it could hope to grow, the western world (communist and non-communist) in a variety of ways went about enriching itself further and maintaining its hegemony.

In an unorthodox analysis of the role of communism in Asia and Europe he suggested that communism was 'the latest weapon of Europe against Asia'. "For three hundred years, Europe has been the prince among continents and liberalism, Christianity or capitalism has admittedly served each in its own way Europe's imperial purposes. Old weapons are blunted. It may well be that Europe's undefeated intelligence is making use of yet another ideological weapon to retain its slipping hold over the world".[10]

Implicit in the communist theory of the historical growth of societies was a commitment to the idea of the everlasting supremacy of Europe. On the Marxist assumption that a new configuration of social forces emerged out of the most fully-developed forces of production, it was obvious that "western Europe which rules in capitalism must inevitably lead in socialism",[11] and by the linear law of evolution European societies would always be the leading ones and the societies of Asia were confined to the unenviable role of imitators.

Communism as Tool of Europe

Communism did not lead to civil wars in Europe, apart from the civil war in Russia which ultimately was not very destructive. He wrote: "European countries have stood to gain by communism. Not one has lost its vitality as a result of it and one has indeed become the most vital state of Europe because of it."[12] In the great crisis of a self-destructive conflict precipitated by non-communist Europeans, communism assisted Europe to 'steady itself': "Had it not been for Russia, the balance of power against Europe would have been far greater. Communism has slowed this shift of power from Europe in the direction of America and almost halted it in the direction of Asia."[13] In Asia, on the other hand, communism had been 'a source of deep discord and tremendous violence', unleashing civil wars in China, Korea, Vietnam, Malaya, Burma, the Philippines and a near civil war in Indonesia. In India communism, in alliance with the British imperialists, supported the demand for Pakistan: "A most breath-taking phenomenon indeed it is, something that reveals a secret and a mystery of these two doctrines, combating in Europe, but combining in India in order to wage war on her and cut her up into two; could there be a greater revelation than this of communism being with capitalism and liberalism a weapon of Europe against Asia?"[14]

Lohia's view of communism as a source of strength to Europe and of discord in Asia overlooks the inherent strength of European societies, whose internal cohesion proved powerful enough to contain the conflicts generated by communism and ultimately succeeded in making communism itself part of the European order. In Asia, on the other hand, the internal incoherence of plural societies was the real cause of their disruption. The doctrine of class war introduced one more element of conflict into an already conflict-ridden situation and the civil wars initiated by the communist parties disorganised further these loosely-knit entities. Whatever view one may take of communist activity in Asia, there is a distinction to be made between the real sources of disruption in these societies and the incidental factor that aggravated the process. Moreover, since Lohia wrote on this subject in 1948, the communist revolution in China has led to the consolidation of that nation, and what was once a movement of European origin has now become an instrument of the national ambitions of an Asian power.

If communism had little to offer to Asia, European socialism, in Lohia's view, could contribute little more. It emphasised gradual change, constitutional protest and a more equitable distribution of wealth, and while its successes in these spheres deserved admiration, "Asian socialism must be drastic, instead of being gradual, and unconstitutional though peaceful, whenever necessary. It will also have to emphasise production".[15] But more important than these differences was the fact that European socialism lacked a world outlook: "I missed in European socialism the ethos and the elan so necessary for the final victory of a doctrine . . . European socialists are so much taken up with the problem of the moment, the statistical evidence and the requirements of their own nation, that they miss the complete view and the world view . . . European socialism does not wish to face the fact that it is striving for plenty and equality in a small area amidst a world full of poverty and tyranny."[16]

Post-War Europe in its mood of self-doubt welcomed socialists from backward areas with a great deal of fellow-feeling, and the latter were full of

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optimism because of the possibilities that national independence seemed to open up for them. Over the years the mood changed completely. Asian socialists failed to become a major political force in their own countries and the Asian Socialist Conference became moribund. With the passage of time socialists in Europe became more, not less, nationalistic and in foreign policy committed to the Atlantic bloc. By 1957 Lohia was disenchanted with both Asian and European socialism, and more so with Asian. He wrote: "These various allegedly socialist movements . . . have heaped infamy on socialism . . . socialism has reached the last limits of inanity in Asia".[17]

V

On Indian foreign policy Lohia's ideas were grounded in his assessment of the interests of the country, the threats it faced and the possibilities open to it. He saw its principal objectives as preserving the freedom of the newly-independent countries, establishing channels of co-operation between them and securing an effective voice for them in world affairs. Nearer home this meant creating closer relations with India's neighbours and taking steps towards linking India and Pakistan in a new association. The emergence of communist China as an aggressive power on the frontiers of India led him to demand a properly-conceived Himalayan policy to preserve the independence of India's neighbours long before the Indian government acknowledged the new danger. Lohia's passionate devotion to Asia did not lead him into the error of overlooking the threat that communist China could present to the non-communist countries of South and South-East Asia. I have the impression that when he talked of Asia Lohia thought mainly of that part of it which had been influenced by Indian civilisation; it was 'Greater India' that was central to his idea of Asia.

India-Pakistan relations occupied his mind throughout the two decades between Partition and his death last year. He had opposed partition and despite the mounting hostility between India and Pakistan he believed that the separation of 1947 was not irrevocable and remained firmly committed to the goal of a confederation. Pakistan is a bit of India torn away from her on 15th August 1947", he wrote in 1950; "Are the Hindus and the Muslims of India two nations or do they constitute one nation? Seven hundred years of Indian history have been of two minds over this question . . . One outcome is nevertheless undisputed. The Muslim of India including Pakistan has greater affinity with the Hindu than with any other national including the Muslims of other lands. Likewise the Hindu of India is related with the Muslim of his land more than with any other national."[18] The Indian people had not yet been turned into two nations: ". . . they are in a fluid state, neither one nor two, perhaps more one than two".[19] He argued that Pakistan in order to preserve its identity, was bound to stress the separateness of Hindus and the Muslims "so that they become two nations irrevocably", while "to achieve the common nationhood and secular democracy of Hindus and Muslims is equally a necessity of the Indian Republic".[20]

Attitude to Pakistan

Lohia emphasised the contradiction between Hindu fanaticism and Indian unity. The source of the communal friction which finally led to the creation of Pakistan lay in the complete mutual ignorance of the Hindus and the Muslims, and in the caste system which had "atrophied the Indian people for political purposes"; if the freedom movement had not remained essentially a movement of the upper castes it might have brought together the masses of the Hindu and Muslim communities and partition might have been avoided. The lesson of the tragedy for India was to build a new polity in which rigid social divisions had no place and leadership rested with the true representatives of the masses; a confederation between India and Pakistan would then become possible on the basis of their shared culture.

This long-term perspective, however, did not lead him to recommend a policy of appeasement towards Pakistan. When the Hindu minority of East Bengal was oppressed he demanded police action, and he was opposed to any concessions over Kashmir or Kutch. He regarded as the precondition of a settlement of outstanding disputes the acceptance by both countries of a subcontinental outlook especially in relations with outside powers, and if Pakistan introduced others into the conflicts of the subcontinent India had to resist both Pakistan and these interested friends.

The contradiction between present hostility and future reconciliation has proved inescapable, and India and Pakistan have continued to move further apart. But those like Lohia who opposed partition in 1947 and sought for it such far-fetched explanations as the caste composition of the freedom movement could never bring themselves to accept its finality. In the first year of Independence the socialists attempted to preserve a single party for both countries and I remember many of us cherishing a foolish hope that if only socialists could come to power in both, the unity of India would be restored.

VI

The catastrophic defeat of the Socialist Party in the first general election marked the beginning of the disintegration of the movement. Among the Party leaders Lohia was perhaps the only one whose will to pursue his objective through political action remained unbroken. The acrimonious controversies that developed within the Party after the election however led to its eventual break-up. From this self-inflicted wound it never recovered. Those controversies are now dead, but the debate throws a vivid light on Lohia's basic position in Indian politics.

The issue that disrupted the Party was the attitude to be adopted towards the Congress and towards the consensus built by Nehru around the aims of industrialisation, democracy and secularism. The Nehru formula envisaged growth without cost to any segment of society and social change within the framework of stable authority. The formula had therefore a wide appeal — indeed so wide that at one time in every party there were groups claiming substantial followings supporting it. In the Socialist Party (now the Praja Socialist Party) the supporters of the Nehru consensus argued for developing "areas of agreement" with the Congress with whom they had till recently shared an organic association, on the ground that national reconstruction called for concerted effort on the part of all elements committed to this consensus and a restraint on opposition politics.

Lohia had no sympathy with this approach. He was committed to competitive politics as a necessary ingredient of the democratic system and held that a 'no-party' or 'all-party' national effort would lead "to either some kind

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of a dictatorship or to the building up of a political party of one's choice". ". . . I cannot understand the decrying of the party system altogether . . . a party is only a way and to destroy the party is to destroy the way."[21] The "areas of disagreement" between the socialists and the Congress Party were greater than those of agreement and by ignoring them the party would stultify itself; more fundamentally, his populist perspective excluded coalitional arrangements between the top leadership of different parties because this would result in managerial rather than democratic politics. "Politics", he argued, "must ever be an effort to wrest away new realms from tyranny to freedom, and that inevitably means clash."[22]

The Socialist Split

There was no meeting point between such pragmatic and absolutist views of politics and the acute differences that developed accordingly among the socialist leaders led to the split in the Party in 1955. Henceforth Lohia's efforts were directed towards organising a new socialist party that acted on his precepts. Though he was in some ways Utopian, he was fully aware of the importance of power in modern societies. The reorganised Socialist Party was meant to pursue a principled political course aimed at achieving power in the States and at the Centre. To keep its identity distinct and to emphasise its commitment to socialist principles, Lohia eschewed electoral alliances in 1957. He denounced the corrupting politics of united fronts. But the results the Party obtained in the second general election were very poor. Lohia himself, who had not contested the election in 1952, was defeated by a Congress candidate from Chandausi parliamentary constituency in Benares district.

The lesson was clear. The defeat of the Socialist Party was due to its failure to organise mass support. Lohia proposed to remove this deficiency by organising the disinherited strata of Indian society — women, Sudras, Harijans, Muslims and Adivasis, who between them constituted the great majority of the population — to constitute the basis of his Party's support. This was a long-term plan and required patient effort. In the immediate future it had little effect on the fortunes of the Socialist Party. In the third general election Lohia stood for Parliament from Phulpur against Jawaharlal Nehru and was defeated. His will was not broken by these successive defeats. His immediate political strategy, however, underwent a drastic change.

Reversal of Strategy

As the efforts to organise a homogeneous socialist movement, powerful enough by itself to replace the Congress Party proved unavailing, Lohia concluded that a new alliance of opposition forces had to be constructed. He classified the opposition parties into 'dynamic' and 'static'. The Communist Party and the Jan Sangh, along with his own party, he put under the first category, while the Congress, the Swatantra and the Praja Socialist Parties he considered static. By dynamic parties he meant those seeking really radical changes. He wrote: "The Communists, for instance, I would consider somewhat dynamic in relation to private property. The Jan Sangh I would similarly consider somewhat dynamic in relation to the issue of language . . . If only the right-minded men among Communists and the Jan Sangh and people like me could get together, we could perhaps cure the Communists of their mistaken beliefs on issues of caste and language and internationalism and particularly with regard to relative spheres of privacy as against collectivity. . . Similarly, the Jan Sangh could perhaps be cured of its mistaken beliefs and policies in relation to property and the Hindu-Muslim question."[23]

This analysis, if it can be called so, paved the way for the Socialist Party's conversion to the politics of united fronts, which it had earlier strenuously opposed. In successive elections it had been seen that the Congress Party won over two-thirds of its legislative seats by a minority of votes and it was clear that if the opposition parties combined to force direct contests the Congress could be defeated. And since Lohia had by now reached the conclusion that the continued dominance of the Congress Party was the principal factor in the stagnation and corruption of political life, he set out to construct an all-embracing anti-Congress front, irrespective of differences of outlook among its constituents.

The national consensus that Nehru had built began to break up after the Chinese attack in 1962, and Lohia's election to Parliament in 1963 from Farrukhabad was in a sense a confirmation of its demise. Soon after his entry into Parliament Lohia emerged as the most impressive and uncompromising critic of government policy and administration. Before him Parliament had not known such an unrelenting opponent of the ruling party, and the opposition parties, by the logic of their political posture and their continuing frustration, were led to accept him as an unofficial leader of the opposition.

The election of 1967 had given Lohia the partial satisfaction of seeing the Congress Party evicted from power in eight States and he looked forward to its early displacement from office at the Centre. The disharmonies among the non-Congress forces did not, initially at any rate, disturb him, and he paid no heed to the argument that the strategy of defeating the Congress by promiscuous alliances of opposition groups would lead to instability and incoherence in government. Perhaps he believed that given time he would be able to bring about coherence among the numerous non-Congress parties and create out of them a viable alternative to the Congress. Death removed him before he had made any progress in that direction. Today the anti-Congress politics of the non-Congress parties appear totally discredited, and nowhere have their alliances made a success of governing. While it is clear that Indian democracy needs an alternative to the Congress, the way to achieve it is yet to emerge.

VII

Rammanohar Lohia was a romantic who cast himself in the role of a non-violent revolutionary. He was not a statesman who built up a state, but a populist who sought to create mass sanctions. Gandhiji was in some ways both, a romantic revolutionary who understood the task of statesmanship. No wonder that Lohia was driven to complain in his last article in *Mankind* that the Mahatma had failed to organise the will of the people.[24]

He was deeply committed to freedom everywhere and his interventions in the freedom struggle in Goa and in the democratic movement in Nepal were characteristic evidence of his concern.

His German training had, I imagine, a considerable impact on his style of thinking and expression. To see grand patterns behind commonplace occur-

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ences and to endow what is ordinary with significance was characteristic of his thought and to look for deeper explanations of social and historical phenomena was one of its stimulating qualities. He had none of the Anglo-Saxon preoccupation with detail — his use of statistics was for polemical purposes rather than for enlightenment — and he measured the results of human actions not by their utility alone but in terms of their historical significance.

The sources of his inspiration were diverse, but the deepest of them must have been the culture and history of India. I know of no public leader in post-Independence India who has written with such depth of feeling of Hindu deities, sages, shrines and legends. He was well aware of their cardinal importance in the making of the Indian personality, and was, I believe, among Indian leaders the only one who tried to understand and articulate their true spirit. The same was true of his writings on Hindu religion and society. "The greatest war in Indian history" he wrote, was between "the liberal and the fanatical in Hinduism." The liberal element in Hindu tradition which promoted tolerance and non-interference, failed to provide a basis for the integration of Hindu society; on the other hand, "fanaticism has often tried to impose the unity of uniformity on Hinduism . . . but the consequences of its acts have always been disastrous".[25] This unresolved conflict — at times active, at other times dormant — still continues to hinder the growth of a unified and free society.

From his writings he emerges as an exceedingly egoistic person who could not work with colleagues. He thought of himself as a prophet and in a prophetic vein once wrote: "The people will listen to me, perhaps after I am dead, but listen they must some day".[26]

He was something of a lone adventurer. When, before the final breach in the socialist movement, he wrote to Jayaprakash Narayan asking him to reassume the leadership, he said: ". . . The priests of Devghar have now closed the register of my family, and they had done so at Mathura a long time back. My path is different . . . There is an emotional bond between you and the country. You alone can be the nation's leader and can further the cause of socialism."[27] And again, "I have been thinking of Paris and Gangotri for a year or so. But I did not have the courage and may not have it in future also. And, perhaps, for me Paris would be nearer than Gangotri."[28]

It is a fruitless task to chronicle the inconsistencies of practising politicians. Rammanohar Lohia's political life had a basic consistency. All his endeavours were marked by a passion to build up the people's capacity to compel accountability from those in authority. In his unrelenting campaign against complacency and hypocrisy, he upheld the tradition of dissent in a climate of conformity.

Notes

1 "Marx, Gandhi and Socialism", Hyderabad, 1963, p 124.
2 "Rs 25,000/- A Day", Hyderabad, 1963, p 105.
3 "Guilty Men of India's Partition", Allahabad, 1960, p 62.
4 "The Caste System", Hyderabad, 1964, p 18.
5 *Ibid*, p 98.
6 *Mankind*, Vol III, p 512.
7 "Interval During Politics", Hyderabad, 1965, pp 97-111.
8 "Marx, Gandhi and Socialism", *op cit*, p 289.
9 *Mankind*, Vol I, p 1134.
10 "Marx, Gandhi and Socialism", *op cit*, p 260.
11 *Ibid*, p 267.
12 *Ibid*, p 261.
13 *Ibid*, p 262.
14 *Ibid*, p 265.
15 "Aspects of Socialist Policy", Bombay, 1952, p 20.
16 "Fragments of a World Mind", Calcutta, 1952, p 11.
17 *Mankind*, Vol II, p 253.
18 "Fragments of a World Mind", *op cit*, p 126.
19 *Ibid*, p 127.
20 *Ibid*.
21 Report of the Special Convention of the Praja Socialist Party, Betul, 1953, p 45.
22 *Ibid*, p 46.
23 "Rs 25,000/- A Day", *op cit*, p 83.
24 *Mankind*, October 1967.
25 "Fragments of a World Mind", *op cit*, p 116.
26 "Rs 25,000/- A Day", *op cit*, p 125.
27 *Mankind*, Vol II, p 260.
28 *Ibid*, p 262.

Government of India

4¼ Per Cent Loan 1975 to be Issued at Rs. 100.00 Per Cent for an Aggregate Amount of Rs. 135 Crores (Nominal) and Repayable at Par on 26th July 1975

Subscriptions to the above loan will be limited to a total of Rs. 135 crores (approximately). Subscriptions may be in the form of (i) cash/cheque or (ii) securities of the 3½ per cent Loan 1968 which will be accepted for conversion at par. Government reserve the right to retain subscriptions upto ten per cent in excess of the notified amount.

If the total subscriptions received for the new loan exceed the notified figure plus the amount of ten per cent retainable as aforesaid, partial allotment will be made in respect of the cash subscriptions received and the balance refunded in cash as soon as possible.

Interest at the rate of 3½ per cent per annum on the securities of 3½ per cent Loan 1968 tendered for conversion will be paid upto and inclusive of 25th July 1968 at the time of issue of the new securities.

The new loan will bear interest from the 26th of July 1968. Interest will be paid half-yearly on the 25th January and 26th July and will be liable to tax under the Income-tax Act, 1961.

Subscription list will open on the 26th of July 1968 and close on 29th of July 1968 or earlier without notice.

Applications for the new loan will be received at :—

(a) Offices of the Reserve Bank of India at Bangalore, Bombay (Fort and Byculla), Calcutta, Kanpur, Madras, Nagpur and New Delhi;

(b) Branches of the subsidiary banks of the State Bank of India conducting Government treasury work; and

(c) Branches of the State Bank of India at other places in India.

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